International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists in 2018

CONCEPT NOTE

Screening of Greg Campbell’s documentary film “HONDROS” co-produced by Riva Marker and Jake Gyllenhaal about award-winning journalist photographer Chris Hondros, followed by a discussion with Producer

Friday, 2 November 2018

1 – 2:50 PM, Conference Room 8, UNHQ, NY

According to UNESCO’s statistics and reports, in the past twelve years (2006-2017) close to 1010 journalists have been killed for reporting the news and bringing information to the public. On average, this constitutes one death every four days. In nine out of ten cases the killers go unpunished. Impunity leads to more killings and is often a symptom of worsening conflict and the breakdown of law and judicial systems. Impunity damages whole societies by covering up serious human rights abuses, corruption, and crime. Governments, civil society, the media, and everyone concerned in upholding the rule of law are called to join in the global efforts to end impunity.

Facts and Figures 2006-2017:

- 1010 killings of journalists have been condemned by UNESCO Director-General in the last 12 years.
- Nine out of ten cases of killed journalists remain unresolved.
- 93% of killed journalists are local and only 7% are foreign correspondents.
- Journalist killing per region: 33.5% in the Arab Region. 26% in Asia & Pacific. 22.9% in Latin America and the Caribbean. 11.6% in Africa. 4% in Central & Eastern Europe. 2.5% in Western Europe and North America.
It is in recognition of the far-reaching consequences of impunity, especially of crimes against journalists, that the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/68/163 at its 68th session in 2013, which proclaimed 2 November as the ‘International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists’. The Resolution urged Member States to implement definite measures countering the present culture of impunity.

In 2018, UNESCO, the Permanent Mission of Greece to the UN, together with the New York Group of Friends for the Protection of Journalists¹, are holding an interactive discussion and screening of “HONDROS”, Greg Campbell’s documentary film about award-winning journalist photographer Chris Hondros, tragically killed in Libya. The event will take place at UN Headquarters in New York on Friday, 2 November from 1 to 2:50 PM.

Ms Riva Marker of Nine Stories Production, Executive Producer of “Hondros”, will interact with the audience following the screening.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) will also be present to introduce their 2018 Global Impunity Index, which spotlights cases of murdered journalists where their killers are still free.

On 2 November 2018, UNESCO is launching an awareness campaign #TruthNeverDies to spread the work of journalists who were killed and to perpetuate their legacy. They were killed in order to be silenced. It is important therefore to assert that the truth will not die, by publishing stories of these journalists and demanding that justice be done.

Take part in this campaign; use the hashtags #TruthNeverDies, #EndImpunity, #Journosafe, and #ProtectJournalists. Through this link you will find a toolkit prepared in collaboration with DDB Communication and available in six languages (English, Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Arabic).

Chris Hondros was one of the best conflict photographer of his generation, having covered practically every major world event of his adult life. Beginning with the war in Kosovo in 1999, Chris served as witness to more than a decade of strife and conflict before he was killed in combat in Libya in April, 2011. But he was so much more than a highly-respected and award-winning photographer.

In this feature length film, Chris's peers portray a man of unusual depth and sensitivity, whose passion for his craft continues to influence people around the world. Whether through his images, his friendship, or his humanity, his touch can still be felt in ways that are inspiring and unexpected. Director and childhood friend Greg Campbell takes viewers on a global journey to meet those in Chris's most influential photos, and to uncover their little known backstories.

¹ Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, France, Jordan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Sweden, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Tunisia, and Uruguay.
Also in New York until 16 December 2018, a Photo Exhibition entitled “War and Peace in Liberia” features the works of Chris Hondros and Tim Hetherington, whose images played an important role in bringing the Liberian conflict to an end. The exhibit has been organized by the Bronx Documentary Center, in collaboration with UN Foundation, UN/DPKO, Getty Images, Magnum Photos and Reporters Instructed in Saving Colleagues (RISC). It is located at the Bronx Documentary Center’s St Mary’s Annex at 364 East 151st Street – free entrance.

BACKGROUND

Impunity for crimes against journalists constitutes one of the main factors fuelling the cycle of violence against the exercise of freedom of expression. It weakens not only freedom of expression and access to information, but all other fundamental rights. Combatting impunity for crimes against journalists is an important step in addressing the high levels of journalists killed, as it perpetuates the cycle of violence against them.

On the initiative of Greece, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/68/163 at its 68th session in 2013, in order to raise awareness on this issue, foster actions of all stakeholders and curb the cycle of violence. The Resolution urged Member States to implement definite measures to counter the present culture of impunity and proclaimed 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists (IDEI). The date was chosen in memory of the assassination of two French journalists in Mali on 2 November 2013. The Resolution requested UNESCO to facilitate the implementation of this International Day.

This action was followed by UNGA Resolution A/RES/69/185 adopted in 2014, recognising that everyone’s right to freedom of expression depends upon the safety of journalists and an end to impunity for crimes against them. UNGA Resolution A/RES/70/162 adopted in 2015 as well as Resolution A/RES/72/175 of 2017, both reinforced the commitment of the UN General Assembly to protect the safety of journalists and end Impunity.

The international Agenda for 2030 set out by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adds impetus to the challenge of ensuring journalist safety and ending impunity. Goal 16 on “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions” is particularly relevant to the issue of safety of journalists, as it calls for the promotion of the rule of law and equal access to justice for all, as well as ensuring public access to information and protecting fundamental freedoms (target 16.10).

The safety of journalists and ending impunity for crimes against them are major assets in ensuring fundamental freedoms and human rights, in particular freedom of expression and public access to information. Accordingly, the UN has developed a specific indicator to review the implementation of target 16.10: “Number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates”.

UNESCO publishes its findings related to the safety of journalists in the ‘World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development: 2017/18 Global Report’. It attests that across the world, journalism is under fire. While more individuals have access to content than ever before, the combination of political polarization and technological change have facilitated the rapid spread of hate speech, misogyny and unverified ‘fake news’, often leading to disproportionate restrictions on freedom of expression.

Moreover, to reinforce prevention, the ‘UN Plan of Action on Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity’ recommends working in cooperation with governments, media houses, professional associations and NGOs to conduct awareness raising campaigns. A number of engaged Member States have formed a Group of Friends on the Safety of Journalists in New York, Paris, Geneva and Vienna. They are leading initiatives to raise awareness on the crimes against journalists and the challenge to bring the perpetrators to justice.